

HAMPTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MINUTES
November 2, 2006

Budget Committee Members Present

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman
Michael Plouffe, Vice-Chairman
Denise Richter, School Board Representative
Maureen Buckley, Precinct Representative
Russ Bernstein
Rusty Bridle
Maury Friedman
Dick Hansen
Jack Lessard
Richard Nichols
Michael Pierce

Excused

Pat Collins
Eileen Latimer
Norman Silberdick

Chairman Woolsey called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Chairman Woolsey introduced the members of the Committee.

Approval of Minutes – October 17, 2006

Moved by Mr. Lessard, seconded by Mr. Plouffe, to approve the Minutes of October 17, 2006.

Vote: 10 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention (Richter). Motion passed.

Chairman Woolsey introduced Interim Town Manager and Town Counsel Mark Gearreald. Mr. Gearreald said he watched the October 17th meeting and he appreciates the Committee's concerns and will try to address them. He said that the budgets brought to the Board of Selectmen by the department heads are "needs based". Mr. Gearreald said the Town is pleased with its extremely well-qualified department heads. He said he was glad the Committee had decided to not focus on the small points. The department heads will explain the changes over last year's budget. There is a 7.85% increase over the current 2006 default budget. Things such as debt, personnel, benefits and insurances over which there is no control make up about half of that budget. There is approximately a 4.18% increase for items over which there is control. Mr. Gearreald said that if there was a flat line budget, it would not really affect the tax rate. It would only make the department heads do more with less. Mr. Gearreald said he was glad the Committee will be looking at the budget closely and will make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen. He suggested that the warrant articles be looked at carefully as they have a dramatic affect on the tax rate.

Chairman Woolsey said that the operating budget has doubled in the last 10 years. She said she was very concerned that we are reaching a breaking point as far as the burden on the taxpayers is

concerned. Debt service is over \$38 million dollars principal and interest. She said she feels this is going to be a tough year for budgets.

Mr. Nichols said the taxpayers have made their feelings clear the last three years.

Chairman Woolsey said tradeoffs, adjustments and give backs should be the Committee's focus.

Town Clerk

Mr. Gearreald introduced Jane Cypher of the Town Clerk's office who was sitting in for Arlene Andreozzi.

Ms. Cypher said that there are not many changes from last year's budget. The part-time wages are for two assistant clerks. She said they are in dire need of a copier. Chairman Woolsey asked about the possibility of one large copier for the Town Hall. Mr. Gearreald replied that this is not practical for the Town Clerk's office.

Moved by Mr. Pierce, seconded by Mr. Nichols, to forward the following to the Board of Selectmen:

THE HAMPTON BUDGET COMMITTEE IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE NUMBER OF COPIERS IN THE TOWN OFFICES

Vote: 11 yes, 0 no. Motion passed unanimously.

Tax Collector

Mr. Gearreald introduced Joyce Sheehan, Tax Collector. He congratulated Joyce on a collection rate of 99%.

Ms. Sheehan said that her office is in need of a printer and cash register, etc. and this is a big concern.

Moved by Mr. Plouffe, seconded by Mr. Lessard, to recommend the following to the Board of Selectmen.

THE TAX COLLECTOR SHOULD BE GIVEN THE TOOLS (CASH REGISTER, PRINTER, ETC.) NEEDED TO PERFORM HER JOB

Vote: 11 yes, 0 no. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Woolsey asked Mr. Gearreald about bulk purchasing of common supplies. He replied that this could be done if the Town had a purchasing agent. Mr. Michael Schwotzer, Finance Officer, said that they recently had a review of W.B. Mason vs. Staples. Staples came back with a better price.

Ms. Sheehan reminded people about the elderly exemption and the veterans' exemption.

Assessor

Mr. Gearreald introduced Bob Estes, Assessing Officer. Mr. Estes said that his budget includes a new position for a data collector. He explained how money could be saved by having this data collector position vs. hiring a company to do the required reval. If the Town waits on this, there is the possibility of having to pay all the money at once to the reval company (approx. \$700,000). Chairman Woolsey suggested starting a capital reserve fund for this (this would be a warrant article). Mr. Gearreald said he felt it is better to leave money in operating budget in case the warrant article fails.

Building Inspector

Mr. Gearreald introduced Kevin Schultz, Building Code Enforcement Officer. Mr. Schultz said his budget is up 10%. This is mostly salary related for a new part-time inspector.

Library

Mr. Gearreald introduced Catherine Redden of the Lane Memorial Library. Ms. Redden said their increase was mainly in wages. Chairman Woolsey reminded the Committee that expenditures in Ms. Redden's area are under the control of elected Trustees of the library.

Mosquito Control

Mr. Gearreald introduced Ann Kaiser of the Mosquito Control Board. Ms. Kaiser said it is very important that enough money is in this budget to prevent a health threat from mosquitoes. She said costs have gone up for both chemicals and machinery (flytraps, etc.). There has also been an increase in the number of catch basins. Chairman Woolsey asked if there would be a warrant article. Ms. Kaiser said no. Everything was in the operating budget. She said her requested budget is in accordance with a guideline from the Department of health and Human Services.

Cemeteries

Mr. Gearreald introduced Mr. Kenny, Cemetery Director, and Mr. Shaw and Mr. Bateman, Cemetery Trustees. Mr. Kenny said they are asking for a 13% increase. They have responsibilities for the High Street Cemetery and seven other cemeteries in Hampton. Most of the increase is for part-time workers. Mr. Kenny explained how well the part-time workers perform their jobs. Mr. Bateman said the part-time workers are really responsible and deserve recognition. Mr. Shaw said there are approximately 48 acres at the High Street Cemetery and that Mr. Kenny does the plowing, thereby saving them an average of \$20,000 per year.

Welfare/Social Services

Mr. Gearreald introduced Maureen Duffy, Administrative Assistant for the Town of Hampton. Mr. Gearreald said that state statutes mandate that the Town assist those who are in need. Ms. Duffy said that there is a 9.61% increase, the majority of which is for the part-time Welfare Clerk's position. There has also been an increase in the price of fuel assistance and food

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assistance. Chairman Woolsey asked if some of the assistance for these recipients can be obtained from other agencies. Ms. Duffy said the new Welfare Clerk works with other agencies.

Mr. Gearreald said the other social service agencies must petition through separate warrant articles.

Chairman Woolsey said the next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 7, at 7:00 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. This meeting will address General Government/Debt Service, Recreation, and Conservation.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Mr. Lessard **moved**, seconded by Mr. Hansen, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Rice
Secretary

Mary-Louise Woolsey, Chairman